DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 996 CE 049 275

AUTHOR Kerka, Sandra
TITLE Adult Career Counseling: An Interactive Model. Overview. ERIC Digest No. 65.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 87
CONTRACT 400-84-0011
NOTE 4p.; Document contains small print.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *Career Counseling; Counseling Objectives; *Counseling Techniques; Disabilities; Dislocated Workers; Displaced Homemakers; *Interaction; Limited English Speaking; Models; Prisoners; Special Programs; *Systems Approach
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; Older Workers

ABSTRACT

A comprehensive delivery system offers several advantages in career counseling programs serving adult clients. Systematic delivery is advantageous because of its developmental emphasis, effective use of resources, amenability to change, provisions for built-in ongoing evaluation, and focus on process and product. A comprehensive adult career counseling delivery system includes the following components: needs assessment, resource assessment, goal setting, planning, establishment of specific objectives, program development, implementation, evaluation, and modification. Vetter et. al. (1986) have developed a six-point interactive model for adult career counseling programs. The model provides for intake (obtaining formal information about the client and establishing a foundation for the counseling relationship); formal assessment (analyzing clients' strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, values, and interests with enough flexibilty to address the needs of special populations); exploration and information gathering (to identify and clarify work values, interests, and skills and to facilitate exploration of specific occupations); decision making (identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives); planning (translating the information gathered in the preceding stages into action); and transition (entry into a training program, education program, or job). Care must also be taken address the special career planning needs of dislocated workers, displaced homemakers, long-term unemployed persons, limited-English proficient individuals, adults with disabilities, incarcerated persons, and older workers. (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED289996

ADULT CAREER COUNSELING:

AN INTERACTIVE MODEL

Overview

ERIC DIGEST NO. 65

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CE049275

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

OVERVIEW

ERIC DIGEST NO. 65

Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

ADULT CAREER COUNSELING: AN INTERACTIVE MODEL

As the provision of career development services for adults becomes increasingly important, a systematic approach can be useful in identifying and using all available resources for adult career counseling. A comprehensive career counseling delivery system can help counselors deal with diverse client populations, adults' need for personal involvement in career planning, and the time constraints often present in working with adults. Advantages of systematic delivery include a developmental emphasis, effective use of resources, amenability to change, built-in ongoing evaluation, and focus on process and product (Walz and Benjamin 1984).

Adult Career Counseling Delivery System

A comprehensive adult career counseling delivery system includes (1) needs assessment, (2) resource assessment, (3) goal setting, (4) planning, (5) establishment of specific objectives, (6) program development, (7) implementation, (8) evaluation, and (9) modification.

In assessing needs for an adult career counseling program, both the needs of clients and of the service provider should be addressed. Client problems in career decision making—getting started; gathering information; generating, evaluating, and selecting alternatives; and formulating plans—as well as the barriers to participation they may face should be determined. Service providers should evaluate what programs they are currently offering and what services are being contemplated, which can reveal unmet counseling needs in the community. The assessment of resources can investigate current and potential funding sources, physical facilities and staff, availability of assessment instruments and career information, and community resources to which clients can be referred.

These needs and resource assessments can be used to establish goals for the adult career counseling program. Examples of general goals include assisting adults in making career decisions, assisting in training or education placements, and assisting employers with hiring decisions.

At the planning stage, the particular circumstances of adult clients require attention. Varying stages of adult development, accessibility of the physical location and hours of service, immediacy and concreteness of adult concerns, implications of family circumstances, and the need for supportive services should all be taken into account. Specific objectives that are sequenced and related to the functions of the career counseling program model should be formulated. Specific incremental objectives may be used to provide positive, reinforcing feedback to the client.

In program development and provision, the primary consideration is the relationship between the clients and the service providers. A partnership approach demonstrates awareness that adults should direct their own career planning, that the client has answers and the counselor's role is to help the client realize this, and that the client should come to "own" the career development process.

To evaluate the effectiveness of career interventions, Fretz (1981) recommends that three dimensions be considered: clients (demographic, psychological, and career-related attributes), treatments (content domain, interpersonal context, degree of structure), and outcomes (career knowledge, skills, and behavior; feelings; effective role functioning). Summative evaluation measures the degree of success in terms of achieving satisfying, gainful employment. Other evaluation considerations are indications that the client accepts personal responsibility for career planning, cost-effectiveness of various treatments, length of time for program completion, client satisfaction, dropout rate, and service to all segments of society.

An Interactive Model for Adult Career Counseling Programs

The model for an adult career counseling program developed by Vetter et al. (1986) involves a great deal of interaction among its six steps: (1) intake, (2) formal assessment, (3) exploration and information gathering, (4) decision making, (5) planning, and (6) transition (to education, training, or employment).

Intake. The intake interview is a means of obtaining information about the client and of establishing a foundation for the counseling relationship. For both purposes of intake—determination of eligibility and orientation to the program—documentation and recordkeeping should be objective, accurate, and thorough. Components of intake forms include name and address, marital and family status, work-related health factors, educational background, employment history, financial resources, motivation for involvement in counseling, and work values. In addition to determining eligibility, this information can be used to consider possible referrals to other agencies, to increase understanding of the purposes of the program, and to explore problems or barriers that could affect success.

Formal Assessment. Formal assessment provides an accurate and thorough information base with which to develop realistic career goals. It generally includes analyzing client strengths, weaknesses, skills, abilities, attitudes, interests, values, and personality. Flexibility in format allows counselors to deal with the needs of special populations. Test administrators must understand the strengths and limitations of the instrument in judging its appropriateness for program use. The possibility of test anxiety in many adults must be considered. The use of computerized career guidance systems is expanding. Heppner and Johnston (1985) provide 17 criteria for evaluating these systems. Vetter et al. (1986) devote half of their publication to a description of 76 formal assessment instruments in terms of name, author, source, purpose, primary user population, materials, technical information, advantages/disadvantages, and sources of additional information.

Exploration and Information Gathering. Exploration activities are designed to identify and clarify work values, investigate occupational interests, acquire information about work skills, and facilitate exploration of specific occupations. Work values clarification helps people determine why they want to work and what characteristics a desirable occupation might have. Examples of values activities include using the LifeCareer Rainbow, which relates short- and long-range work goals to the goals of other life roles; specifying job preferences; and rating work values in terms of their relative importance to the individual.

Decision Making. The decision-making phase of the model applies the information gathered in a structured way that can

ERIC is sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

help clients avoid such common problems as too much or not enough information, too many or too few alternatives, and poor evaluation of risks and potential outcomes. The interaction between model steps is intensified when it becomes clear that additional exploration/information gathering or formal assessments are needed before decision making can progress.

Career decision making focuses on identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives; it is a process that occurs continuously throughout an adult's life. Examples of decision-making activities include (1) the Life Line Exercise, a means of examining an individual's history of decision making and determining the degree of personal control that has been used; (2) force field analysis, in which forces that work for and against one's goals are evaluated and rank ordered; and (3) analysis of the degree of difficulty and motivation for the risks one has taken.

Planning. The planning phase completes assessment, exploration, and decision making by translating information into action. Counselors should ensure that career plans are concrete, specific, and realistic. Exercises can help clarify goals and objectives, identify resources for attaining them, and determine barriers and strategies for overcoming them. In planning, the counselor and client assess skills needed and match them with the educational and training opportunities available. Flexibility is added by considering contingency or alternative plans to increase the possibility of success.

Transition. The outcome of the decision-making and planning phases of the model, depending on the individual client, may be entrance into a training program, an educational program, a job-seeking program, or directly into employment.

Needs of Specific Client Groups

This section describes some special group characteristics that require different counseling approaches to meet the career planning needs of these adults.

Dislocated workers may experience shock, denial, anger, and depression; they may also reach a stage of job search burnout. Most tend to have a negative, limited, and underestimated view of their skills. Special attention to formal and informal assessment instruments can help identify client assets to be communicated to prospective employers.

In addition to career counseling, **displaced homemakers** often need assistance with job training, search, and placement as well as support services such as child care.

The **long-term unemployed** include inner-city minorities, high school dropouts, single parents, and recent immigrants, among others. These economically disadvantaged persons are likely to require longer, more expensive training. Personality traits such as responsibility, self-esteem, and self-confidence influence their success or failure. Intelligent and discretionary use of testing as well as long-term observation of behavior patterns are needed in the career counseling process.

The **limited-English proficient** face many barriers to full employment despite the fact that they often have marketable job skills. A clear understanding of their degree of proficiency in English, training plans that include English-as-a-second-language instruction, and special counseling about culturally appropriate behavior are needed.

Counselors of **adults with disabilities** should help clients explore their employment expectations and discuss potential employer prejudice and supervisory discrimination. Many career guidance and assessment tools specifically relate to disabled populations, and the tangible benefits of computer applications in rehabilitation services are being recognized.

The **incarcerated** present a unique challenge to career counselors, who must strive to develop in them fundamental values consistent with societal expectations and to assist them with realistic career development plans.

Although **older workers** tend to be self-directed and somewhat resistant to change, their experience provides a great resource for problem solving. Planning for career change should build on their unique experiences and abilities and should consider the effects of aging on their physical capabilities. Creativity in dealing with fear of testing may be required.

Resources for Adult Career Counseling

As mentioned, Vetter et al. (1986) provide descriptions of 76 assessment instruments, indexed by title, instrument type, population, time of administration, reading level, and scoring procedures. In addition, the volume includes numerous illustrations of appropriate exercises for the different phases of the program model. The bibliography also provides resources for additional instruments, activities, and program development.

REFERENCES

This **Digest** is based on the following publication:

Vetter, Louise; Hull, William L.; Putzstuck, Christine; and Dean, Gary J. *Adult Career Counseling: Resources for Program Planning and Development*. Bloomington, IL: Meridian Education Corporation, 1986.

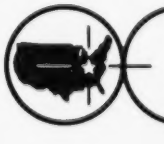
Additional References

Fretz, Bruce R. "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Career Interventions." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 28, no. 1 (January 1981): 77-90. (ERIC No. EJ 238 360)

Heppner, Mary J., and Johnston, Joe A. "Computerized Career Guidance Information Systems: Guidelines for Selection." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 26, no. 2 (March 1985): 156-163. (ERIC No. EJ 318 087)

Walz, Garry R., and Benjamin, Libby. "A Systems Approach to Career Guidance." *Vocational Guidance Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (September 1984): 26-34. (ERIC No. EJ 316 349)

This **Digest** was developed in 1987 by Sandra Kerka, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. 400-84-0011. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the position or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.



THE NATIONAL CENTER
FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1960 KENNY ROAD · COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210